

1 Corinthians 15:35-38a, 42-49

³⁵But someone will object, “How can it be that the dead are raised? With what kind of body are they going to come?”

³⁶You are being foolish. What you sow is not made alive unless it dies. ³⁷And what you sow is not the body that will be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or some other grain. ³⁸But God gives it a body of the kind he wanted it to have.

⁴²That is the way the resurrection of the dead will be. What is sown is perishable; it is raised imperishable. ⁴³It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. ⁴⁴It is sown as a natural body; it is raised as a spiritual body.

If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵So also it is written, “The first man, Adam, became a living natural being.” The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶However, that which is spiritual is not first; rather, first comes the natural, then the spiritual. ⁴⁷The first man is of the earth, made of dust. The second man is the Lord from heaven. ⁴⁸As was the man made of dust, so are the people who are made of dust, and as is the heavenly man, so the heavenly people will be. ⁴⁹And just as we have borne the image of the man made of dust, let us also bear the image of the heavenly man.

Your Resurrection Body

I.

The pitch man stood on his little elevated platform in his Costco-like demonstration booth. A hush fell on the assembled masses. They understood he was there to pitch the latest and greatest product. He began his pitch.

Look at how 1st Century Ultra-Slim-Fast has helped me! Drinking a healthy shake every day, along with some Superfoods and my membership at the Corinth gym, I have been able to sculpt my body into what you see before you today. *You* can have the same success I have enjoyed. Buy my products, and do a little work and you will be amazed!

The people of Corinth lived for the moment. The goal was to be able to compete for a victor’s wreath in the games. They were fixated on the body. Simple observation showed that if one took care of the body, you could be a competitor.

The products never lived up to the hype. There is only so much a person can do before nature takes its course. The body grows older. It becomes more susceptible to sickness. Finally, everybody dies. Their bodies are buried and decay.

Christianity messed up the logic the people of Corinth were accustomed to. In this Letter to the Corinthians Paul had spoken about the resurrection of the dead.

II.

“But someone will object, ‘How can it be that the dead are raised? With what kind of body are they going to come?’” (1 Corinthians 15:35, EHV). All kinds of questions seem perfectly logical to the natural mind when it comes to the resurrection.

But what about...? And what about...? What about people who were born deformed, or had some kind of crippling disease during their lifetimes? What about people who died in horrific ways in war or natural disaster or some other gruesome fashion?

Those questions are all missing the point. Doc said it well to Marty McFly in the Back

to the Future movies: “You’re not thinking fourth-dimensionally.”

Our questions reveal how locked in to space and time we truly are. We have a problem seeing the future—the eternal future.

“You are being foolish. What you sow is not made alive unless it dies. ³⁷And what you sow is not the body that will be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or some other grain” (1 Corinthians 15:36-37, EHV). Farmers *have* to be able to see the future—at least, as far as their knowledge of seasons goes. When a farmer plants some grain, there is a risk of losing it. If all the farmer has is a desire to *protect* the grain, it will be stored in a dry place to keep it from rotting. Putting the seed into the ground means that the seed will start to decay. But the same process that *destroys* the grain causes the seed to sprout and produce a new plant. Looking fourth-dimensionally into the future, the farmer realizes that risk brings great reward.

The natural body is plagued by sin. It all started in the Garden of Eden. ““The first man, Adam, became a living natural being.’ ... ⁴⁷The first man is of the earth, made of dust” (1 Corinthians 15:45, 47, EHV). God created Adam from the dust of the earth and breathed into him the breath of life. Adam and Eve were created to be like God—perfect and without sin.

But they plucked the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden and ate it. In so doing, they brought down on all mankind the fruits of sin.

Genesis 3 records the results: “To the woman [God] said, ‘I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing’ ... ¹⁷ To Adam he said... ‘Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life... ¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return” (Genesis 3:16-17, 19, NIV84). In his Letter to the Romans, Paul adds: “We know that all of creation is groaning with birth pains right up to the present time” (Romans 8:22, EHV).

The bad things we have to deal with in this world are the result of sin. It’s not cause and effect—your individual, specific problems are not specific punishment from God because of your individual, specific sins—cancer and war and illness and heartache are all just creation groaning from the effects of sin.

III.

The solution to the problem of sin is Jesus. Paul calls him the Second Adam, the Second Man, or the Last Adam. “The last Adam became a life-giving spirit... ⁴⁷ The second man is the Lord from heaven” (1 Corinthians 15:45, 47, EHV).

Jesus came to perform the Great Exchange. He took on himself the curse of sin that has plagued mankind since the Fall. The pain of childbirth and disease that human beings have dealt with since the fall, the challenges people have faced in earning a living, all the wars and crimes perpetrated on mankind since Adam and Eve, and all the rest of the groans of creation were *nothing* compared to the pain Jesus suffered on the cross for the sins of the world. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34, EHV) was the ultimate cry of pain. Jesus was abandoned by the Heavenly Father to face the pain of hell alone in our place.

In exchange for our sin, he *gave* us the life we were always intended to have—the life that makes us right with God—spiritual life. “The last Adam became a life-giving spirit” (1 Corinthians 15:45, EHV).

Jesus, of course, did not stay in his grave. He rose from the dead with a glorified body.

He has ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Heavenly Father until the time is right to bring us to the eternal mansions of heaven.

IV.

What will it be like? We have a hard time thinking fourth-dimensionally.

The growth of a seed into a seedling and finally a plant producing grain is something our space-and-time-bound minds can at least begin to grasp. “What you sow is not the body that will be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or some other grain. ³⁸But God gives it a body of the kind he wanted it to have. ⁴²That is the way the resurrection of the dead will be. What is sown is perishable; it is raised imperishable. ⁴³It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. ⁴⁴It is sown as a natural body; it is raised as a spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:37-44, EHV).

The body that is buried has some not-so-fantastic qualities. It is perishable—that is, it is subject to all the problems added to a world that deals with sin, like sickness and injury and disease and, eventually, death. It is sown in dishonor. At birth—even at conception—we have the inherited problem of sin and all the challenges that brings us in life. It is sown in weakness. Painful toil God told Adam he would have to deal with as he scraped out a living. The weakness of our natural body is only able to overcome and deal with so much before we succumb to death. It is sown a natural body.

The resurrected body has fantastic qualities. It is imperishable—in other words, it will never die, but live with the Lord Jesus forever in heaven. It is raised in glory—that is there are *none* of the problems and challenges that come along with sin when we are raised from the dead. It is raised in power—that is there are none of the limitations of weakness; nothing of the painful toil of this life will be remembered. It is raised a spiritual body.

What will it be like? We have a hard time thinking fourth-dimensionally. Martin Luther took a stab at it. “We, however, know that later and at the proper time the body, weak and devoid of all strength and power though it may now be when it lies in the grave, will be so strong that with one finger it will be able to carry this church...and play with a mountain as children play with a ball.... Nothing that it decides to do will be impossible for it... It will become so light and nimble that it will soar both down here on earth and up above in the heavens in a moment (Luther’s Works, Vol 28, Page 188).

“Just as we have borne the image of the man made of dust, let us also bear the image of the heavenly man” (1 Corinthians 15:49, EHV). We just can’t think fourth-dimensionally. One product lives up to all the hype—salvation in Christ Jesus which means that we will be given a new, resurrected body. Locked in space and time as we are, there is no way we can fully appreciate what is to come. Paul’s soaring words remind us that we will be like Jesus. The wait will be worth it. God keep you until the resurrection. Amen.